

fro thee his face and his eris of miseri-
corde; and also he hath suffred that thou
hast been punysshed in the manere that
thow hast ytrespassed. Thou hast doon
synne agayn oure Lord Crist; for certes,
the thre enemyes of mankynde, that is to
seyn, the flessch, the feend & the world, thou
hast suffred hem entre into thyne herte
wilfully by the wyndowes of thy body, and
hast nat defended thyself suffisantly a-
gayns hire assautes & hire temptaciouns,
so that they han wounded thy soule in five
places; this is to seyn, the deadly synnes
that been entred into thyne herte by thy five
wittes. And in the same manere oure Lord
Crist hath wooldand suffred, that thy thre
enemyes been entred into thyne hous by the
wyndowes, & han ywounded thy doghter
in the foreseyde manere.

CERTES, quod Melibee, I se wel that
ye enforce yow muchel by wordes
to overcome me in swich manere,
that I shal nat venge me of myne enemyes;
shewynge me the perils and the yvels
that myghten falle of this vengeance. But
whoso wolde considere in alle vengeance
the perils and yvels that myghte sewe of
vengeance / takynge, a man wolde nevere
take vengeance, & that were harm; for by the
vengeance / takynge been the wikked men
dissevered fro the goode men. And they
that han wyl to do wikkednesse restreyn
hir wikked purpos, whan they seen the
punysshynge and chastisyng of the tres-
passours.

AND to this answerde dame Pru-
dence: Certes, seyde she, I graunte
wel that of vengeance cometh much
el yvel and muchel goode; but vengeance /
takynge aperteneth nat unto everichoon,
but only unto juges, & unto hem that han
jurisdictioun upon the trespassours.

AND yet seye I moore; that right as a
singuler persone synneth in takynge
vengeance of another man, right so
synneth the juge if he do no vengeance of
hem that it han disserved; for Senec seith
thus: That maister, he seith, is good
that proveth shrewes. And, as Cassidore
seith, A man dredeth to do outrages whan
he woot and knoweth that it displeth to
the juges & sovereyns. And another seith
The juge that dredeth to do right, mak-
eth men shrewes. And Seint Paule the
apostle seith in his epistle, whan he writ-
eth unto the Romyngs: that, The juges
beren nat the spere withouten cause; but
they beren it to punyssh the shrewes and
mysdoeres, & for to defende the goode men.
If ye wol thanne take vengeance of youre
enemyes, ye shul retourne or have youre
recours to the juge that hath the jurisdic-
tioun upon hem; and he shal punyssh hem

as the lawe axeth and requireth.

A QUOD Melibee, this vengeance
liketh me no thyng. I bithenke me
now and take heede, how fortune
hath norissed me fro my childhede, and
hath holpen me to passe many a stroong
paas. Now wol I assaye hire, throwynge,
with Goddes helpe, that she shal helpeme
my shame for to venge.

CERTES, quod Prudence, if
ye wol werke by my conseil, ye
shul nat assaye fortune by
no wey; ne ye shul nat lene or
bowe unto hire, after the word
of Senec: for Thynges that
been folty doon, and that been in hope of
fortune, shullen nevere come to good ende.
And, as the same Senec seith, The moore
cleer and the moore shynnyng that fortune
is, the moore brotil and the sonner broken
she is. Trusteth nat in hire, for she nys
nat stidefaste ne stable; for whan thou
trowest to be moost seur or siker of hire
helpe, she wol faille thee and deceyve thee.
And whereas ye seyn that fortune hath
norissed yow fro youre childhede, I seye,
that in so muchel shul ye the lasse truste
in hire and in hir wit; for Senec seith,
What man that is norissed by fortune she
maketh hym a greet fool. Now thanne,
syn ye desire and axe vengeance, and the
vengeance that is doon after the lawe and
bifore the juge ne liketh yow nat, and the
vengeance that is doon in hope of fortune
is perilous and uncertein, thanne have ye
noon oother remedie, but for to have youre
recours unto the sovereyn juge that veng-
eth alle vileynyes and wronges; and he shal
venge yow after that hymself witnesseth,
whereas he seith, I levethe the vengeance
to me, and I shal do it.

MELIBEE answerde, If I ne venge
me nat of the vileynye that men han
doon to me, I sompne or warne hem
that han doon to me that vileynye and alle
othere, to do me another vileynye; for it is
writen, If thou take no vengeance of an
oold vileynye, thou sompnest thyme ad-
versaries to do thee a new vileynye. And
also, for my suffrance, men wolden do to me
so muchel vileynye, that I myghte neither
bere it ne susteine; and so sholde I been
put and holden over lowe. for men seyn,
In muchel suffryng shul manye thynges
falle unto thee whiche thou shalt nat mowe
suffre.

CERTES, quod Prudence, I graunte
yow that overmuchel suffrauncys
nat good; but yet ne folweth it nat
therof, that every persone to whom men
doon vileynye take of it vengeance; for that
aperteneth & longeth al only to the juges,
for they shul venge the vileynyes and in-

juries. And therefore tho two auctoritees
that ye han seyde above, been only under-
stonden in the juges; for whan they suffren
overmuchel the wronges and the vileynyes
to be doon withouten punysshynge, they
sompne nat a man al only for to do newe
wronges, but they comanden it. Also, a
wys man seith: that The juge that correct-
eth nat the synnere, comandeth & biddeth
hym do synne. And the juges & sovereyns
myghten in hir land so muchel suffre of the
shrewes and mysdoeres, that they shold-
en by swich suffrance, by proces of tyme,
wexen of swich power & myght, that they
sholden putte out the juges & the sover-
eyns from hir places, and atte laste maken
hem lesen hire lordshipes.

AT lat us now putte, that ye have leve
to venge yow. I seye ye been nat of
myght & power as now to venge yow.
for if ye wole maken comparisoun unto the
myght of youre adversaries, ye shul fynde
in manye thynges, that I have shewed yow
er this, that hire condicioun is bettre than
yours; and therefore seye I, that it is good
as now that ye suffre and be pacient.

NORTHERMOORE, ye knowen wel
that, after the comune sawe, It is a
woodnesse a man to stryve with a
strenger or a moore myghty man than he is
hymself; & for to stryve with a man of evene
strengthe that is to seyn, with as stronge
a man as he, it is peril; and for to stryve
with a weyker man, it is folie; and therefore
sholde a man flee stryvyng as muchel as
hem myghte. for Salomon seith, It is a greet
worshippe to a man to kepen hym fro noyse
& stryf. And if it so bifalle or happe that
a man of gretter myght and strengthe than
thou art do thee grevaunce, studie & bisye
thee rather to stille the same grevaunce,
than for to venge thee; for Senec seith that
He putteth hym in greet peril that stryv-
eth with a gretter man than he is hymself.
And Catoun seith, If a man of hyer es-
taat or degree, or moore myghty than thou,
do thee any or grevaunce, suffre hym; for
he that oones hath greved thee, another
tyme may releve thee and helpe.

ET sette I caas, ye have bothe myght
and licence for to venge yow; I seye
that ther be fulmany thynges that
shul restreyn yow of vengeance / takynge,
and make yow for to encline to suffre, and
for to han pacience in the thynges that han
been doon to yow. first and foreward, if ye
wole considere the defautes that been in
yours owene persone, for whiche defautes
God hath suffred yow have this tribula-
cioun, as I have seyde yow heer bifore; for
the poete seith, that We oghte paciently
taken the tribulacions that comen to us,
whan we thynken and consideren that we

han disserved to have hem. And Seint Gre-
gorie seith: that Whan a man considereth
wel the nombre of his defautes and of his
synnes, the peynes and the tribulaciouns
that he suffreth semen the lesse unto hym;
& inasmuche as hym thynketh his synnes
moore hevy and grevous, inasmuche sem-
eth his peyne the lighter, & the esier unto
him.

AL SO ye owen to encline and bowe
yours herte to take the pacience of
oure Lord Jhesu Crist, as seith
Seint Peter in his epistles: Jhesu Crist,
he seith, hath suffred for us and yeven en-
sample to every man to folwe & sewe hym;
for he dide nevere synne, ne nevere cam ther
a vileynous word out of his mouth; whan
men cursed hym, he cursed hem noght;
and whan men betten hym, he manaced hem
noght. Also the grete pacience which the
seintes that been in paradys han had in
tribulaciouns that they han ysuffred, with-
outen hir desert or gilt, oghte muchel stiren
yow to pacience. forthermoore, ye sholde
enforce yow to have pacience, consideryng
that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel
while endure, and soone passed been and
goone; & the joye that a man seketh to have
by pacience in tribulaciouns is perdurable;
after that the Apostle seith in his epistle:
The joye of God, he seith, is perdurable,
that is to seyn, everelastyng.

AL SO troweth & bileveth stedefastly,
that he nys nat wel ynorissed, ne wel
ytaught, that kan nat have pacience,
or wol nat receyve pacience. for Salomon
seith: that The doctrine & the wit of a man
is knowen by pacience. And in another place
he seith: that He that is pacient governeth
hym by greet prudence. And the same Salo-
mon seith, The angry and wrathful man
maketh noyses, and the pacient man atem-
preth hem and stilleth. He seith also: It
is moore worth to be pacient, than for to be
right strong; & he that may have the lord-
shipe of his owene herte is moore to preyse
than he that by his force or strengthe tak-
eth grete citees; and therefore seith Seint
Jame in his epistle: that Pacience is a greet
vertu of perfeccioun.

CERTES, quod Melibee, I
graunte yow, dame Prudence,
that pacience is a greet vertu
of perfeccioun; but every man
may nat have the perfeccioun
that ye seken; ne I nam nat of
the nombre of right parfite men, for myn
herte may nevere been in pees unto the tyme
it be venged. And albeit so that it was greet
peril to myn enemyes to do me a vileynye in
takynge vengeance upon me, yet tooken
they noon heede of the peril, but fulfilleden
hir wikked wyl, and hir corage. And ther-